

NSC BRIEFING

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LAOS

DEBATE BEGINS
TODAY

- I. Premier designate Katay, a symbol of firm policy toward Pathet Lao, now appears to have only 50-50 chance of forming a new gov't.
 - A. He is attempting to build gov't on the two leading parties--Nationalists and Independents--which control approximately 27 of the 39 national assembly deputies.
 - B. The fellow-travelling National Union Party and the small Democrat Party (about 9 seats) oppose him.
- II. Katay's chief difficulty is cumbersome constitutional provision which requires two-thirds majority for investiture, but prohibits deputies who are also prospective cabinet ministers from voting for own confirmation.
 - A. Katay has 10 deputies in proposed cabinet; therefore, only 10 votes of remaining 29 necessary to defeat him.
 - B. Seven or eight deputies now in firm opposition; any breach in either Nationalist or Independent Party would defeat Katay.
- III. The Pathet Lao are campaigning to block Katay and return the tractable Souvanna Phouma.
 - A. Pathet delegation in Vientiane has threatened reprisals against individual deputies and cabinet ministers, and resumption of hostilities if Katay is successful.
 - B. Pathet chief Souphannouvong wrote national assembly that Souvanna is only statesman with whom he can settle.
- IV. If Katay fails, prospects are for prolonged political crisis from which Pathets likely be chief beneficiaries.